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FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2167
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 6485
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0416
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 3808
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7688
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 4934
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2177
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 2266
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4366
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 4817
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 9408
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0106
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SUBJECT: MORALES' ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY RALLY

REF: LA PAZ 168

¶1. (U) On January 22, the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) threw President Evo Morales a one year anniversary party in La Paz's Plaza de los Heroes. The event started late due to Morales' four and one-half hour address to Congress (Reftel). Surprisingly, only about 4000 MAS party loyalists attended the rally. Its theme, "Bolivia: Democratic and Cultural Revolution," was plastered throughout the plaza, along with hundreds of Venezuelan flags and posters of Morales' major accomplishments. Before Morales took center stage, his supporters were feted with bags of coca leaves, folk music, and speeches by campesino leader Gerardo Garcia, Senate President Santos Ramirez, and Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca. Choquehuanca summoned the spirits of Inca leader Atahualpa and indigenous freedom fighters Tupac Amaru and Tupak Katari, and argued the Morales regime had ended the 500 year-long "looting" of Bolivia's natural resources. Santos Ramirez stated that Morales had begun Bolivia's revolution for "dignity, sovereignty, and social justice," arguing that "the people" should defend the GOB's process of change wherever it is threatened, even in the streets.

¶2. (U) Perhaps winded after his congressional speech marathon, Morales spoke at the rally was just a half an hour. The speech, interrupted by frequent fireworks, reflected on the GOB's achievements, including the recapturing of Bolivia's natural resources (nationalization of hydrocarbons), the constituent assembly, land reform, the continued support of the international community, and the GOB's sound economic policies. Morales noted that many analysts had predicted his administration would only last three to six months; that inflation and foreign debt would balloon under his tenure; and that economic growth, foreign assistance and the central bank's reserves would dwindle. Instead, he said, the Inter-American Development Bank had agreed to write off Bolivia's debt, inflation remained low, and economic growth and international reserves were at near all-time highs. Morales took the opportunity to thank the diplomatic corps and international institutions in attendance, but singled out only Cuba, Venezuela, and China by name. Morales also announced the formation of a national coordinating committee with representatives from unions, the executive, and the legislative branches to discuss Bolivia's

transformation.

13. (SBU) Comment: The relatively low turn-out for this rally appears to be consistent with Morales' decline in popularity. However, with a 59 percent popularity rating (according to a December poll) and a laundry list of accomplishments, Morales continues to enjoy the support of the majority of the Bolivian population, and particularly those who have been historically disenfranchised. End comment.

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